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Confessions of a Lapsed Handpress Printer

Richard/Gabriel Rummonds

The Press of the Golden Key

Richard H. Dillon

Dan De Quille

Annie Racer

Review: Dalrymple

Robert J. Chandler

Serendipity

Gifts & Acquisitions

Elected to Membership

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Confessions of a Lapsed Handpress Printer

Richard/Gabriel Rummonds

Back in 1977, when I was still a printer and first starting to give talks about my work on the handpress in public, I would often mention, partly in jest and partly to shock, that for me, printing was an erotic experience; however, I could just as easily have said that it was a religious one since both of these experiences are deeply imbued with implications of ecstasy, with something beyond our immediate control, perhaps even mystical.

I was an early convert to the handpress even though I began my printing career on a small, table-top Superior press in Quito, Ecuador, in 1965, and over the next three years gradually upgraded my printing equipment, initially to a Replex proof press and then to a Vandercook. Even though I was already familiar with *livre d'artiste* from my college days at Syracuse University in the late 1940s, I was not aware of handpresses or the books produced on them until Armando Braun Menéndez, the scholar and bibliophile, introduced me to the world of private presses in his library in Buenos Aires in 1967. As I sat in awe, he regaled me with a succession of incredibly beautiful books, many of which were printed in Argentina on a handpress by Francisco Colombo and his sons, Emilio and Osvaldo. These books not only sparked my imagination but also revealed to me a subliminal glimpse of a centuries-old technology that I would fervently embrace one day in the not-too-distant future.

By 1968, after a five-year absence, I was once again living in Manhattan, working as a book designer at Random House/Knopf and trying to assemble a print shop. In my spare time, I continued to seek out all the information I could about private presses. Lewis Stark and Philomena Houlihan at the New York Public Library inundated me with the works of the great English and German handpresses — Kelmscott, Doves, Ashendene, Bremer, and Cranach — as well as a number of books printed by American handpress printers such as Lewis and Dorothy Allen and William Everson. Later that year, in November, at a Columbia University reception for the late German/Italian handpress printer Giovanni Mardersteig, I became engaged in a long conversation with his son Martino, who worked with his father at their commercial press, the Stampe-

ria Valdonega, in Verona. Listening to Martino, I instantly saw the potential of the handpress as an instrument of printing perfection and was won over to his point of view as much by the manner in which he enthusiastically proclaimed the superiority of the handpress over the proof press as by his Germanic beauty. If I were serious about fine printing, he said, I would have to do it on the handpress.

My real baptism on the handpress, however, came early the following year when I located an unused Washington handpress at Robert Haas's Ram Press, a commercial fine press in New York. Haas, himself a former handpress printer, was pleased to find someone who wanted to learn how to print on a handpress. Soon after our first meeting, I moved my meager printing equipment — including a small Vandercook which was promptly sold — into a corner of his loft, setting up shop next to the Washington. Haas had shown me several beautiful books that he had printed on a handpress in Vienna in the 1930s, but, unfortunately, when he tried to reconstruct the procedures, explain the dynamics of the handpress, he could no longer remember even the rudiments of the press's operation; and so I ended up coming away from his shop empty-handed. I felt cheated at the time, knowing that he was my only hope of finding a teacher in the New York City area. Today, I understand Haas much better since I have also been away from the handpress for a number of years — although not nearly as many as he had been — and I too am beginning to forget many of the details and sub-

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tleties that were once second nature to me as I worked on the handpress, first in Verona, Italy, and then in Cottdale, Alabama.

It is a sad reflection, but when I first took up the handpress in 1969, there were only five handpress printers in the States producing books on a regular basis. They were Lewis and Dorothy Allen (Allen Press), Harry Duncan (Cumington Press and Abattoir Editions), Carolyn Reading Hammer (Anvil Press and King Library Press), and Kim Merker (Windhover Press and Stone Wall Press). Almost twenty years later, when I abandoned the handpress, neither the status quo nor the names had changed. Even though I knew of their existence and had seen examples of their work at the New York Public Library, I decided to turn to Europe for guidance and inspiration.

Fully aware that I could not count on any help from Giovanni Mardersteig at his private press, the Officina Bodoni, I still opted to move the Plain Wrapper Press to Verona. On a visit to Italy in December 1969, I discovered that, besides Mardersteig, there were several other handpress printers working full or part time in Verona. Among those from whom I learned the most were Franco Riva, whom I consider to be the greatest of all the Veronese handpress printers, and the erratic Renzo Sommaruga. Franco taught me the esthetics of the handpress; Renzo, the finer points of typography. In the meantime, I had acquired a beautiful 1847 R. Hoe Washington handpress of my own from Joseph Low, the illustrator. Low had found it in West Virginia, where it had been used for almost a hundred years to print a weekly newspaper. This press — together with all the fonts of foundry type and reams of handmade paper that I had accumulated in the past two years — was crated up and shipped to Italy. In addition, Verona put me geographically close to the sources of many of the materials that I intended to use, such as Italian, French, and English handmade papers and European foundry type.

I set up shop first in a Renaissance palace just a few short steps from the Duomo. There I worked mostly alone although from time to time I had an occasional helper, and from 1973 on, even though they did not actually “work” at the press, I always had the moral support and sometimes the physical labor of Golda Fishbein and her two children, Lauren and Mark. Golda designed the pressmark that was used in all PWP items from 1974 on. She also hand lettered several title pages for the press. It was there, in the Via Duomo studio in 1974, after seven years of sporadic work, that I finally finished what is often referred to as my *capolavoro* or masterpiece, *Siete Poemas Sajones* by Jorge Luis Borges, with embellishments by Arnaldo Pomodoro which included three gold-plated bronzes imbedded in the parchment-covered boards. Before this publication, most of the work done at the press had been keepsakes and commissions. The only notable exception was *Images & Footsteps* by Paul Zweig, with five etchings

by Berta Moltke, which was, incidentally, the first item to be printed after my arrival in Verona.

Serious book printing began at the Plain Wrapper Press when Alessandro Zanella, a handsome young man interested in learning how to print on the handpress, joined me toward the end of 1976. The first item we printed together was *Will and Testament* by Anthony Burgess, with eight screenprints by Joe Tilson. The following year, we moved the press into another palace in Via Carlo Cattaneo, just a block away from the Arena, the Roman amphitheater in Piazza Bra, Verona's principal square. The press remained there until 1982, when we closed the doors for good and divided up the materials and equipment — I kept the Washington and Albion handpresses, and Alessandro took the Stanhope. We also divvied up the few remaining titles that were still in print and what little cash there was in the bank. When it was all over, we sat at a rickety old Formica-topped table in my apartment, staring at each other with tears in our eyes. We had so little to show for all those years of hard work and personal sacrifice. Alessandro opened his own press, Edizioni Ampersand in Verona, and I moved to Cottdale, where I started another press, taking *Ex Ophidia* ("from the serpent") for my new imprint.

Printing in Italy was by no means easy, especially in the early 1970s when I was still getting used to the press's machinations, mostly through trial and error. In addition, I had to adjust to the Didot point system, the continental typographic standard. Throughout my printing career, I was obliged to maintain separate cases for Pica and Didot type and spacing materials. Fortunately, the height of the type was not a problem when packing the handpress. To my credit, as unskilled as I still was, I had progressed considerably since those early days in Quito when I used a shoe box cover as a typestick. At least in Verona, I was able to avail myself of two excellent books: Lewis Allen's *Printing with the Handpress* and Herbert Simon and Harry Carter's *Printing Explained*, both of which illuminated many of the basic functions of the handpress. However, as good as these books were, they still were never able to resolve for me the nagging problems of makeready and balancing the platen. These two procedures are extremely difficult to describe in words because they change from form to form. I have always been the sort of person who needs formulae and recipes which can be repeated and repeated, giving the same results each time instead of the hit-and-miss approach that I had been using ever since I first took up the handpress.

There were a few splendid compensations, however, for the hardships and frustrations that I experienced trying to print and publish expensive limited editions in Italy. One of these was Italy itself, specifically Verona; both were very good to me. I quickly embraced the Italian language and the Veronese lifestyle

— a lifestyle that still influences my taste and behavior today — and made friends who are still cherished even though distance now prevents us from seeing much of each other. Aside from the reasonable cost of living in Italy in the 1970s — my apartment/studio in Via Duomo was \$35 a month — perhaps the single most important thing that made it possible to work there was the attitude of the Italians themselves and their love of beautiful books. They bought my books even when they could not read the texts. The Plain Wrapper Press and I just barely survived those meager years because of the generous support from my Italian collectors. The press was about 80% subscribed, which meant that once a book was printed and bound, I could usually count on enough money coming in within the first few weeks to pay off my debts and perhaps have a small reserve to start the next project. The subscriber breakdown was about one third, Italy; one third, North America; and the remaining third, the rest of the world. The majority of standing-order subscribers were private collectors.

In 1996, I again had a chance to survey what I had accomplished during those twelve years in Verona and six in Cottondale when Brad Hutchinson at Digital Letterpress and Craig Jensen at BookLab, both in Austin, Texas, combined their talents to produce *A Sampler of Leaves from Plain Wrapper Press and Ex Ophidia Books*. This project was originally conceived as a companion book to my memoir, *Fantasies and Hard Knocks: My Life As a Printer*, together with bibliographical descriptions of my work by Elaine Smyth. The text had already been set in Monotype by Michael Bixler, but W. Thomas Taylor, the publisher, withdrew it — rumor had it that there was “too much sex” in it for him — so he ended up issuing only the bibliography. The memoir still remains unpublished, and with that project's demise, I never expected to see the special copies of leaves published. Over the years, I had saved almost all of the overruns and rejected sections from the books I printed, many of which contained original graphics such as etchings and screenprints, and still had them packed up in boxes in Los Angeles wondering what to do with them. At Brad's and Craig's urging, I had put together forty sets, each with twenty-two sections, including eleven with original illustrations. It was an incredibly difficult task for me, bringing back vivid memories of the frustrations, the pains, the regrets, and, yes, some of the joys, although these were very few and far between. Of the forty-two items that I printed between 1965 and 1988, I must admit that there is not a single one that wholly pleases me. Having so completely disassociated myself from my work, I can only react to the inherent beauty I see in a few isolated details. Whenever I look at these books now, I often ask myself, “Did you really print these; are you really the person who was responsible for them?” In an effort to further expiate myself from my printing past, I recently sold my personal collection of Plain Wrapper Press and Ex Ophidia books to the Knight Library at the University

of Oregon, where Bernie McTigue, a long-time supporter of my work, is head of special collections.

Returning for a moment to my opening remarks about printing being an erotic/religious experience: Anyone who has ever actually worked on a handpress will tell you — maybe not in the same words I used, but the essence will still be there — that printing on a handpress is a sensuous, tactile experience unlike any other. There is a flow of steps or procedures: Beginning with the setting of the type, putting it in the bed, making sure it is locked in tight; handling the dampened paper — limp like a piece of fine cloth — floating it through the air to the tympan and pressing it onto the pins, violating its pristineness; folding down the frisket; gently holding the heavy ink roller, letting it ever so lightly distribute a thin film of ink on the type; folding down the tympan/frisket assembly and rolling it together with the bed under the platen; pulling the arm; feeling the form's resistance; and then the big BANG — the impression has been made. The almost ballet-like movements and rhythms of these repeated sequences are intoxicating, exhilarating.

Not only the printer, but also the reader can feel the sensual experience of the book. When a handpress book is first opened, all of the reader's senses will instantly come alive. The hand responds to the tactility of the paper, the barely visible bite of the type in the paper; the eye is drawn to the richness of the ink impressed into the paper, the beauty of the illustrations; the nose picks up the smell of the size in the paper and the myriad scents of the binding materials; the ear acknowledges the crackle of the paper as the leaves are turned. And last, but by no means to be overlooked, the pleasure of reading the text in such a special format. The hand-printed book may have been created as an object, but it is after all, and will always remain, primarily a container for the author's words and ideas. The reader's reaction may not be as vociferous as Meg Ryan's was in the movie *When Harry Met Sally*, but I can see in my imagination a reader sighing, "Oh, oh, Jorge," "Ah, ah, Italo," "Yes, yes, Anthony."

Many people, especially collectors, have asked me why I stopped printing. There were many reasons, but two should suffice. The first was a matter of economics. The costs of printing limited editions on a handpress have become almost prohibitive. I wrote an article for the July 1987 issue of *Fine Print* on "The Economics of Printing Limited Editions." In it I mentioned that I factored in my labor at \$4.00 an hour. Obviously, it is not the cost of the printer's labor, then or now, that makes them so expensive. The materials such as handmade paper and foundry type — when they can be found — have skyrocketed, and as in the past, the costs of a fine binding can still represent about one-third of the production costs. But these factors aside; where are the collectors today?

I discovered, when I sent out prospectuses for the *Sampler* to former PWP collectors, that the fine printing market as I knew it in the 1970s and 1980s no longer exists. Many of the PWP private collectors are dead — mostly from old age; book collectors, thank goodness, seem to have long lives. At the libraries and public institutions with extensive PWP collections, most of the librarians who bought and encouraged my work have long since retired or died. Their successors, younger people in most cases, are less interested in private press books and fine printing than their predecessors had been. I was told by the present librarians at the Gleeson Library at the University of San Francisco and the Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas, where Steve Corey and Decherd Turner respectively had so painstakingly assembled noteworthy collections, that the library's collecting interests had shifted to other areas. Those few libraries that are still interested in collecting fine printing are strapped for funds, so that it is often impossible for them to acquire expensive illustrated limited editions, the type of book for which the PWP was primarily known. The Boston Athenaeum, the New York Public Library, and the University of Georgia were three of the institutions that had been long-time PWP standing order collectors. They were able to acquire the *Sampler*, but I am sure at a great sacrifice. Booksellers such as the Bromers, Muir Dawson, Robert Fleck at Oak Knoll Books, and Anthony Rota have remained true friends of the PWP and have also purchased copies of the *Sampler*, but I often wonder where they will find customers for handpress books such as this. There does, however, still seem to be a strong market for out-of-print handpress books: Bromer Booksellers has a copy of the Borges/Pomodoro book for sale at \$8,000 (it was issued in 1974 at \$1,200) and James Jaffe listed the Calvino/Frasconi book in a 1994 catalog at \$1,000 (it was issued in 1985 at \$400).

The second reason why I stopped printing is a bit more complicated. In 1976, I was invited by James Ramer, the dean of the library school at the University of Alabama, to be a visiting lecturer during the 1977 spring semester. While in Alabama, Ramer and I wrote a proposal for an MFA in the Book Arts program (the first such program in the States) which was eventually implemented in 1983. I returned to the university in 1979 and 1981, and in 1982, I accepted a full-time faculty position there as director of the Institute for the Book Arts, the predecessor to the MFA program. My decision to stay and direct the new program was instrumental in my decision to close the press in Verona. By now, I had formulae for most of the problems I had encountered on the handpress and was eager to pass on this information to a new generation of handpress printers, saving them from the frustrations I had experienced.

The demands of the program at the university left me little time for my own publishing projects. Of the six items printed in Cottondale, two of the most pleasing were *Prima Che Tu Dica*, "Pronto" by Italo Calvino, with four multicolor woodcuts by Antonio Frasconi, and *Journeys in Sunlight* by Dana Gioia, with four etchings by Fulvio Testa. After Ramer retired, the new dean and the faculty took what I considered a very shortsighted view of the program; and so I took early retirement and moved to Los Angeles in 1988.

Teaching at Alabama left me very bitter, so much so that I wanted nothing more to do with printing even though I had offers to go elsewhere. Just before I left Alabama, I sold my entire shop to Gregor Peterson's Huckleberry Press in Incline Village, Nevada. John Balkwill, one of my former students, was working with Greg at the time and he brought us together. As I stood at the side of the country road and watched the eighteen-wheeler, loaded down with two handpresses, a one-ton standing press, and approximately two hundred cases of type, slowly move up the hill away from my empty studio, I sighed with relief—but no tears this time; the emotional weight, the one I had carried on my shoulders since the early 1970s as well as the actual physical weight of the equipment for which I had so long been custodian, vanished from sight. I was walking on air. I went into the house and poured myself a stiff drink in order to bring my body back to earth.

I came out of "retirement" in 1991 and again in 1992, when David Pankow asked me to teach a workshop at Rochester Institute of Technology. We decided that it would emphasize problem-solving instead of the usual type of workshop where the participants print a pretty little book. I prepared a 133-page workbook for the first workshop. With encouragement from Roderick and Stephen Stinehour, this was expanded into a 1147-page manuscript, titled *Printing on the Iron Handpress: A Contemporary Approach with Selected Readings on Historical Practices*, scheduled for publication by Oak Knoll Books in the fall of 1997.

Will I ever print again, be brought back into the fold? I doubt it. I may give a few more workshops like the two I gave at Rochester Institute of Technology once the manual is published, but my current interest in screenwriting seems to satisfy all of the old needs in my life for erotic/religious experiences.

Richard-Gabriel Rummonds, a native Californian, is a screenwriter in Seattle, where he teaches in the Design Department at Cornish College of the Arts. For almost twenty-five years, under the imprints of the Plain Wrapper Press and Ex Ophidia, he printed and published illustrated limited editions on the handpress, primarily in Verona, Italy, and Cottondale, Alabama. In 1981, two major retrospectives of his work were held at the New York Public Library and the Gleeson Library at the University of San Francisco. He was appointed founding director of the MFA in the Book Arts program at the University of Alabama in 1984.

The Press of the Golden Key

Donald R. Fleming, as proprietor of the Press of the Golden Key, surely qualifies as The Book Club's Dean of Avocational Printers. The proof is in the Collection of fine print ephemera which he has just given to The Club's library.

Born (1913) in little Sunnyside — figuratively, at least, on the very banks of the Yakima River in trans-Cascadian Washington — he was removed to God's Country (San Francisco) before the year was out. Nothing much happened until 1935, when he took his BA from the University of California, Berkeley, where he "majored," unofficially, at least, in music and (like Gregory Peck, but not at the same time) crew.

Fleming next took part in a United States Navy flight cadet program at Pensacola, 1935-36. After training as a pilot, he went into civilian life rather than the Navy, however, eventually having a long career with Schwabacher-Frey and KGO-TV. Donald married Katheryn in 1940, and he and Kathi had a daughter, Kathryn (yes, no "e"), who grew up to become a collector of Oz books, à la Peter Hanff.

Then came Pearl Harbor and in 1942 Don rejoined the Navy as a lieutenant j.g. (junior grade), to act as an air controller in command of aviation facilities at

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Sanford and Bar Harbor, Maine. He also served in Morocco with the Free French forces in anti-submarine warfare. After the war, he continued in the Naval Reserve and, after twenty-three years, retired as a lieutenant commander.

Don Fleming swears that he started collecting books when he was only three years old. He had help, albeit much later, from Kathi, also David Magee, Betty Downs, John and Warren Howell, Henry Evans, Carl Wheat, Jim Hart, Mike Harrison, and Jennifer Larson. Over the years, besides fine printing, Don has collected Americana, the West, ephemera, decorated trade bindings (Margaret Armstrong, etc.), and such individual authors and artists as George Sterling, Booth Tarkington, Valenti Angelo, and John DePol. With a bit of the pack rat in his nature, he has also collected glass, porcelain, silver, and just about anything he could get his hooks on.

Fleming's printing mentors comprise a stellar cast of characters — Ted Lilienthal, Carroll Harris, Roger Levenson, Bob, Ed, and Jane Grabhorn, Lawton and Alfred Kennedy, Bill Partmann, Don Kelley, and Susan Acker. His twin interests of book collecting and printing drew him into The Book Club of California, of which he became President; the Roxburghe Club, of which he was anointed Master of the Press; the Colophon Club; the Gleeson Library associates of the University of San Francisco, of which he is a Fellow and an ex-President; the Friends of the Bancroft Library; the American Printing History Association; and the Private Libraries Association. He is also an active member of the San Francisco Corral of the Westerners.

The Press of the Golden Key is equipped with a Washington-type Reliance press; a Gordon; a 100-year-old Gally Universal power press; a Vandercook cylinder hand press; and fonts of forty-odd type faces. The Golden Key got its start thanks to Ted Lilienthal's donations from the Quercus Press and Bill Partmann's bringing over the Washington press. Lawton Kennedy then stuffed Fleming's mind with printing tips. Ed Grabhorn provided the necessary philosophy of printing as Valenti Angelo added suggestions in artistry and Roger Levenson backgrounded everything. Then Kathi Fleming took over as Printer's Devil, "speaking softly but carrying a big stick" in T. R. fashion, in the words of the Golden Key's Master of the Press.

When queried about the scope of his printing, Fleming replies, "I print only what the urge allows." If asked if he is particularly proud of some aspect of his printing, he responds, "Never having caught my hand in the press."

Señor Fleming must enjoy a twenty-eight-hour day. Besides his job, family, press, and collecting, he has, as an Old Blue, probably attended as many Cal football games as operas and symphonies. He is also a card-carrying World Traveler although he lives in one paradise, the San Francisco Bay Area (Orin-

da) and summers in another, on Guemes Island in Washington's Puget Sound. He has been to Mexico, Germany, Austria, and the Near East. He has visited Spain five times, France six times, and England ten times. Not content with "mainland" Scotland, he has voyaged to the Hebrides, Orkneys, and Shetlands. He is as familiar with the Danube as with the Rhine and the Seine. As for the U.S. of A., he knows "the States" like the palm of his paw, having toured almost every nook and cranny of the continent by boat, train, car, and shank's mare, including the West's historic trails. (As an unofficial travel agent, he steered the writer of these remarks to such splendid vacation places as Deerfield, Massachusetts, and Castine, Maine.)

The donation of eighty-two different items of ephemera from the Press of the Golden Key, first in Piedmont, then Orinda, demonstrates the variety of the Flemings' interests. The imprints range in size and format from a small membership card in the Ship Press Chappel aboard the *Balclutha* to folio-sized broadsides. There is one wine label, for a Shanandoah (Amador County) zinfandel, and twenty-one different Christmas cards. One of the latter is inscribed "For Ted and Fran Lilienthal, the first production of our press." Alas, it is not dated, and the *Maestro de la Prensa* cannot now remember exactly when it appeared, other than "forty or forty-five years ago." The card bears an 1855 copper engraving of a Southwest mission, perhaps Tumacacori.

Most of the items in the collection are announcements, invitations, and, especially, keepsakes for the Roxburghe Club of San Francisco, including its joint meetings with the Zamorano Club of Los Angeles. But there are also imprints pertaining to the Sacramento Book Collectors' Club, the Gleeson Library Associates, the McCune Collection, the Small Press Club of Marin, and an Orindan *sängerbund* (or something) called the Owl Hill Music Society. All of the work by the Flemings is meticulously done.

About ten of the items have an added "contents value" above and beyond their esthetics as fine printing. Two are mini leaf-books, that is, leaf-pamphlets. One is Donald's *Poetica Typographia Johnsonia*, an appreciation of John Johnson's (1824) *Typographia* with an original leaf from that volume. The other is *An Original Leaf from Padre Francisco Palou's Noticias de Nueva California*, with a commentary by Jennifer Larson. Somewhat similar is Duncan Olmsted's *Papyrus*, which has a sample swatch of the Egyptian reed paper tipped in, rather than a page from a book. *Paul Revere Reflects on the Famous Midnight Ride* is the New England silversmith's own account of his dash for Lexington, in a letter to a friend. *Casanova and Boswell* is a bit of detective work by Norman Carlson, who placed the two men together but once, in an inn in Berlin during 1764. *Chief Charlot's Battle with Bureaucracy* is a reprinting of Michael Harrison's article in *Montana*

magazine about that Flathead chieftain. David Myrick's brief report on the little-known Californian ghost town of Montgomery is welcome information, and his larger *Potosí* is a substantial essay on that Bolivian silver strike. Very interesting is the Flemings' rescue from oblivion of a 1901 book review. It is really an essay-in-brief by twenty-five-year-old Jack London on Frank Norris's *The Octopus*. It appeared in the short-lived and obscure *Impressions* magazine.

Perhaps the most useful publication of the press is the 1988 reprint of *Gold Rush Literature: A Symposium*, originally compiled by Oscar Lewis as an article in The Book Club's *Quarterly News-Letter*. Californiana experts like Francis Farquhar, Carl Wheat, and Joseph Henry Jackson were persuaded each to choose just ten essential titles on the Gold Rush. Their selection remains an excellent guide today to someone collecting in this specific field of Western Americana.

What most impresses one about the main subject of this sketch is not his skill as a printer, which is considerable; his collecting; his many travels; his dedicated service to his country. It is his amazing zest for life. Incredibly, in 1996 Donald Fleming appears to retain the youthful enthusiasms of 1936! If we could just capture this magic spirit and package it for sale, we'd make a fortune.

— Richard H. Dillon

The Talent of Dan De Quille

by Annie Racer

Influenza hit hard in the winter of 1898, and in his seventieth year Dan died that March as one of its victims. He had been a remarkable writer and newspaper reporter. After his death, men wrote that Dan "was gifted in a hundred ways," and that "no man was ever more honest or conscientious" than this Quaker. An associate on the Virginia City *Territorial Enterprise* wrote that "he was one of the most efficient and valuable men that ever wore out his life in a newspaper office." He was associated with that newspaper between the ages of thirty-three and sixty-four, from 1862 to 1893.

Dan De Quille was talented as a writer just as his personal qualities were exemplary. He was favorably compared with Mark Twain, with whom he worked on the newspaper. While his colleagues thought that Dan De Quille and Mark Twain were "about equally good" as literary inventors, they felt that in the early 1860s Dan was the better writer. Dan had "much more power" than Twain, and associates judged that Dan often did the better work. Both wrote

tall stories, wrote hoaxes, told anecdotes using dialect, were masters of absurdity, and used similar material.

As Richard G. Lillard has written in the *Pacific Historical Review* of September, 1944, reporter De Quille "held the conviction that first place belonged to accurate mining news — prospects, locations, mills, shafts, ore developments, stopes, assays, bullion outputs." The storyteller De Quille was a keen observer of men and manners, crafting sketches of street fights, mining hazards, bad men, scarcity of wood, April-fool pranks, spirit-rappers, city elections, fires, mill warmings, litigation, and family life. He could also spoof the swindles of land brokers and mining officials. His pen was kind and good natured, not sarcastic, angering people as Mark Twain's did at times. These two men were friends as well as, for a time, colleagues — to the extent that Samuel Clemens wrote the "introductory" in 1876 to De Quille's great history of the Comstock Lode. Dan was a remarkable newspaperman, a Western humorist and what Lillard called "the chief diarist of an extinct but extraordinary way of life, the civilization, of bonanza days in Silverland."

Tall, slender, with a full beard, Dan De Quille was a miner in mining country writing for miners and telling marvelous tales, some true reporting and some starting as a realistic account and gradually metamorphosing into burlesque or

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an extravaganza. Mining was hard, dirty, agonizing work; reporting the enterprise was also hard. As Dan much later wrote (quoted in *History of Nevada with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of its Prominent Men and Pioneers*, Oakland, 1881, pp. 320-321): "In the early days, the reporters had no easy time of it when they went forth to gather mining news.... Many of the shafts were untimbered...and the only machinery was a windlass. In descending to inspect material encountered at the bottom of a shaft, the reporter placed his foot in a loop at the end of a rope, and so was sent spinning round and round, from 100 to 300 feet to the bottom.... [swaying] from side to side, striking first one side and then the other of the rocky walls."

Life in the mines was frequently harsh, severe, and dangerous. No wonder that miners valued their time off. They loved the joking, the tall tales, the gaming and drinking, and what little entertainment came to these sudden towns. The boom-to-bust nature of this work, the travails on this rough edge of a civilized country, underscored the marginal nature of the life. And the criminal element was attracted to the money that was around, with vigilante law being the rapid way to eliminate those infringing on the unwritten rules of this tough life.

Humor was a relief. And writers like Mark Twain, Bret Harte, and Dan De Quille wrote hundreds of reports and tales for such newspapers as the *Territorial Enterprise* and the San Francisco *Golden Era*. Taking the latter as an example, one finds the adventurous stories and tall tales filling much of the first half of the paper, leaving the news reports to the second half. And who wrote these stories? The authors are Erato, Crowquill, Palmetto, Silverpen, H. Achilles Flipp, Orpheus C. Kerr, Gushalino Crushit, Comet Quirls, Dr. Smoothiron, T. De M. Hylton, Count De Buffon, Gravity Joy, Bret [Harte], and Dan De Quille. What good times the folk in the mining country and northern California must have had with the names, to say nothing of the tales themselves!

Dan's contributions included short stories such as "Ye Bummer," "Down-easter and the Bull," "The Way of Love," and "How Uncle Bob 'Got' His 'First Injun'." Some were based on his extensive mine reporting, examples being "Ye Hydraulic" and "The Silver Man." Yet he also wrote picturesque tales, of which "The Wealth of Washoe" and "California" were instances. Later, in 1876, Dan recounted the story of the famous Snowshoe Thompson and published that same year his famous 569-page history of the Comstock silver lode, entitled *The Big Bonanza*.

As a sample from this dandy quill, here is one tale he sent from Silver City, Nevada, to the weekly *Golden Era*, found on the front page of its issue for January 26, 1862:

"The Feller What Ain't Runnin' for No Office."

By Dan De Quille

Oh! dear Mr. Era! I'm all out of breath — I've had *such* a fright! Went up to town to-day, as usual, and slipped into the *Bureau de la Poste* — then came out and stopped a moment in front of the Eastern Slope Hotel.

As I stood leaning against a hitching-post, I noticed a group of some six or eight rough-looking men — *gens de pen* — regarding me attentively. They put their heads together and whispered for some time, occasionally casting curious glances toward me. At length one of them left the group and approaching me, made a tolerably elegant bow, at the same time giving the ground a graceful scrape with his left foot.

"How d' doo," said he. "No reason to complain, I thank you," replied I.

The man hesitated a moment — cocked his wool hat to one side — looked slyly at me for a moment, as if trying to read something in my countenance — looked perplexed — scratching his head, then eyed me closely again: Evidently there was something about me that he couldn't exactly make out. At length he seemed to make up his mind to speak. Stroking his beard carelessly and still eyeing me, he thus addressed me:

"Excuse me, sir, but what is it you are running for? — if you please, we couldn't exactly make out, and we thought as how there would be no great harm in asking you, if you please?"

"My good man, if I am at all aware, I am not running at all — it rather strikes me that I am *standing still* at present."

"Yes, sir, of course you are; but you don't understand, sir — if you please, sir, I wish to know what office you are running for?"

"My good man, your question is very proper and I answer it with pleasure. I am running for no office at all."

Puts on a disappointed, hurt look : "I am sorry, Mister, that you choose to answer in such a way, though of course there may be reasons for hangin' back and keepin' a little shady till the time comes to pull the wires and make yer bow to the people, still if you were to put a little trust in us — just to let us know what you are runnin' for — we might be able to do you a heap of service on election day," — looks at me coaxingly.

"I do most solemnly assure you, my good friend, that I am a candidate for no office, nor have I ever been." My solemn manner seemed to convince him at last that I told the truth, though I could plainly see that he was almost struck dumb with astonishment.

He gazed at me for a whole minute with open mouth and widely distended eyes — his every feature rigid, wooden with wonder. He at length turned away and joined his comrades, turning about once or twice as he went, to stare at me again.

The whispering again commenced, and soon six pair of eyes were turned full upon me in a fixed, leaden gaze, and six relaxed jaws left six open mouths yawning towards

me. One by one they left their places and timidly took up a closer position about me, still staring in silence. This was a little more than I liked, for on what ever side I turned I met a stare and a face expressive of the most intense wonder and curiosity. I determined to escape this most perplexing and unaccountable scrutiny. Why they were staring at me in this manner was more than I could comprehend. I looked at my clothes in front, felt in my rear — looked cross-eyed at my nose, to see if it were blacked — took off my hat and looked all round it — nothing wrong that I could discover; but I noticed that all these different movements seemed to greatly gratify my audience of starers. I noticed them nod significantly to each other when I took off my hat, and thought one of them said: “’taint cut Heenan style.”

Buttoning my coat closely about me I hastily crossed the street, entered a store and stepped out the back way, struck up an alley into the next street and turning down that determined to make my way home as soon as possible. Suddenly I heard shouts in different parts of town of — “Where is he?” “Where did he go?” “Where did you see him last?” etc.

My first thought was that Bill Mayfield had again filed off his irons and had escaped. I rushed to where the excitement seemed to have reached its highest pitch, and was greatly surprised and alarmed to see the whole crowd rush toward me, with the fellow who had questioned me so closely at its head shouting — “Here he comes, here he comes! that’s him — whoop! that’s him!”

In an instant I was surrounded by a dense swaying crowd who seemed in a perfect phrenzy of excitement. On every side they were pushing and crowding to get near me, and on every side the wild yell went up — “Whop! hurra! here he is!”

“Gentlemen!” — I cried, striving to make myself heard above the Babel of voices, and extremely alarmed, for I knew that if one man should raise the cry of — “hang him,” up I would go before I had time for the last [*sic*] explanation — “gentlemen, you are most assuredly mistaken in your man! My name — *my name*,” yelled I, in a voice that almost split my throat — my name is De Quille, and I can find any number of good citizens to testify to my respectability! You are certainly — certainly —

“He’s the man! Whoora! he’s the man!”

“Gentlemen — for God’s sake! — I beg — ”

“Whoora! we’ve found him! Whoop! he’s the man!”

“Oh! gentlemen, I have a wife and three sweet innocent — ”

“Whoo-ra-a! we’ve found him!”

“Spare my life, gentlemen — on my knees I pray you — Oh think of my darling chi — ”

But here my voice was drowned down in their demon shouts of joy at having me secure. Seeing that they had no rope and did not even attempt to seize me, I felt somewhat encouraged, and taking advantage of a temporary lull in the shouting I had presence of mind enough to ask:

“Gentlemen, for Heaven’s sake tell me what is the meaning of all this?”

“Ain’t you the feller what aint a running for no office!” asked a most ferocious fel-

low, whose whole face was covered with a matted bed of bushy beard, of a grizzly yellow color.

"I cannot deny, gentlemen, that I did, perhaps too hastily decide — that is decline to offer myself as a candidate for office in this Territory; but, gentlemen, rather than that you should proceed to extrem — "

"Whoop! hurrah! we've got him!" Whoora! he's the right feller! "Hyar he is — hyar's the feller wot aint a candidate. Whoop! hoora! hyar ye can see him!"

I now gave myself up for lost, for the multitude swayed violently to and fro, yells rent the air and they seemed on the point of rushing on me and rending me limb from limb. By degrees, the crowd grew less boisterous and again I had hope that I might yet be spared. Men, women and children now began to flock round me from all quarters — all gazing at me from head to foot with the greatest curiosity.

Several ladies had stood for some time before me — the men having given way to make room for them — gazing at me from head to foot in silence, but with the most intense curiosity visible in their features and darting at me from their distended eyes. They whispered together a few moments, when one of them left the groups and going up to a man standing near — her husband perhaps — plucked him by the sleeve, when he leaned down his head while she whispered something in his ear.

He nodded assent and, coming forward to where I stood, very gently took off my hat.

The ladies approached me and gazed very earnestly at my head, two or three of them walking entirely around me and even laying their hands on my hair in one or two instances. Apparently satisfied they withdrew to a little distance and several old women came up to have a closer view. Some of them had children in their arms, and pointing toward me, they held them up that they might observe me well.

The first great burst of excitement over, I was greatly perplexed to observe what a great silence had fallen on the multitude. They spoke to each other only in whispers and, most singular of all, seemed greatly awed by my presence. They did not jostle me, or in any manner treat me with the slightest disrespect, yet all, old and young, male and female, gazed on me with the serious, fixed gaze of persons fascinated. It was unaccountable — beyond my comprehension. I pinched my arms to assure myself that it was not all a dream, but no, I was awake.

Seeing that there seemed to be no desire to hurt me in any way, I began to think of moving off. This I found a most difficult matter though the people did not attempt to detain me by force, yet they crowded so closely about me that I found it almost impossible to move.

[Here the narrator loses his coat buttons to the crowd for souvenirs; he meets a lame girl who looks down his throat and notes that his "tongue was not forked" and his gullet "too small to swallow a bribe."]

Struggling through the crowd I at last got clear of the pressure, and was making fast time for home, when an old lady came shrieking after me.

When she had adjusted her spectacles, I took off my hat, opened my mouth and put out my tongue, then gave her a button off my pants. Then, addressing her, I said: "My good old Mother, I beg, as I have now gratified you, that you will have the kindness to inform me why it is that I seem to be such an object of curiosity to all these good people?"

"La, me! and don't you know? — why its because you're the only man in this Territory that ain't a candidate for some office!"

Silver City, January 15th, 1862.

Some background may help to understand this talented writer. Dan De Quille was the last pseudonym of William Wright, born May 9, 1829, in Knox County, Ohio. He was the eldest of nine children of a farming couple who moved west from Ohio to the vicinity of Cedar Falls, Iowa. On his father's side was a Quaker pioneer who came to Philadelphia with William Penn and later founded Wright Colony, northwest from the Dulles Airport of today. His mother Morrison's side came from the north of Ireland, a forebear being the commander of a British warship who resigned his commission during the Revolution rather than attack the colonists.

William Wright worked on the family farm before managing a farm of his own. He married, had a son and, later, two daughters. It was in 1857 that this young man left for the gold fields of California, prospecting through 140 miles of the Sierra foothills from Mariposa to Nevada counties, but "not making much over 'grub,'" as he wrote to his brother-in-law. In 1860, news of silver strikes on the eastern slope of the Sierra drew him over the divide by way of Yo Semite Valley to that region. He first prospected at Bodie in the Mono Lake area, then in Washoe Valley, at Gold Canyon (later called Gold Hill), and finally worked at Yellow Jacket Mine in Silver City. He also about that time resumed his writing of humorous sketches and mining articles for newspapers. He used Ebenezer Queerkutt and Picaroon Pax as two pen names before settling on the nom de plume he would use for over thirty years.

He was a contributor to *Golden Era*, providing tales which established his reputation in the West. This led to his being offered in 1862 the *Territorial Enterprise* position of Local Editor by J.T. Goodman, the Editor-in-Chief. Soon a Reporter called "Josh" was added to the writing staff, a young man six years Dan's junior who took a dislike to his nickname and changed it to "Mark Twain."

Dan De Quille spent highly productive decades with the *Enterprise*, witnessed the devastating fire in Virginia City in October, 1875, then experienced in the 1880s the decline of Virginia City from a one-time population of 25,000, the

closure of the *Enterprise* in 1893, and finally the decline of his health from rheumatism. Comstock Boss John Mackey gave Dan money in 1896 or 1897 to recuperate in Iowa, and it was there that flu ended his life just short of sixty-eight years.

James J. Rawls has done us all a favor by compiling a summary of Wright's career, a very difficult task indeed since "Dan De Quille" wrote and published many hundreds of sketches, stories, tales, and reports in over a dozen newspapers and magazines. The Book Club of California in 1980 published Rawls's work under the title *Dan De Quille of the Big Bonanza*, a handsome book which included five of Dan's especially interesting tales as well as an item of nonfiction which is a sensitive history of the 1890 Paiute Ghost Dance revival. (The tales and history as published were taken from manuscripts in the library of the California Historical Society, now in lovely efficient new quarters on Mission Street, San Francisco.)

The talent of Dan De Quille was comparable with that of Mark Twain and Bret Harte. His literary output was huge and the best of it stands up very well today. As James Rawls concludes, "he did not produce the kind of major work which one expects of a first-rate writer. One must be careful, however, not to underrate the accomplishment of Dan De Quille. He was foremost a journalist, and in his chosen profession he excelled.... It is in the mass of those daily contributions to newspapers and magazines throughout the West that the measure of his achievement is to be made."

Dan's sterling character was mixed with a certain home-spun nature. His anecdotes and droll stories were great fabrications, what Dan called "quaints." His scientific hoaxes gained international attention. He was unusually brave when faced by a gunman. With all his energy and prodigious work, however, he lacked a certain degree of ambition, quite different from Mark Twain or even Bret Harte. Writing in the *San Francisco Chronicle* January 10, 1892 — six years before Dan's death — his Editor-in-Chief at the *Enterprise* judged Dan fully the equal of Twain "in every respect except the commercial instinct requisite for successfully marketing his talent." Nevertheless, De Quille was a very popular and highly successful writer; the remnants of his career as raconteur and humorist are many tales splashed with charming local color depicting exceptional experiences and events. Again to cite Lillard, Dan was at his best "when writing close to human subjects — Chinese, Frenchmen, Irishmen, Piutes, prospectors, roughs, bummers, muckers, and those sallow slovenly poor whites from the Mississippi Valley whom the early West called Pikes."

The late author and teacher Wallace Stegner has written that Bret Harte had exceptional economy in his writing, and the ability to adapt the short story to

Californian materials, so that "his example emancipated writers in every region, confirming them in their subject matter and confirming them in their preference for the short-story form." Bret's tales of the Sierra have the same flavor as do many of Dan's. Local color, regular folk, simple talk, irony, a concise and economical presentation — and an abundance of humor — these form the common denominator of much of the work of Mark Twain, Bret Harte, and Dan De Quille. The newspapers and magazines of the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s must have been a joy to read, much enlivening life in the mining camps and elsewhere in the West. And "Dan De Quille" contributed a full measure to the grand spirit of those historic times.

Ms. Racer is a long-time member of The Club, a sometime Board member, a lover of fine books, occasional historian, and, with the assistance of Mr. Norm de Plume of Santa Clara County, an assiduous collector of the original works of Mr. De Quille, in parts.

Serendipity

The Committee Chairman's Musings:

We let the whole of 1996 pass without honoring Harold Wollenberg on his 90th birthday. Harold has been the mainstay of numerous Book Club committees, currently chairing one presenting awards in memory of that legendary Book Clubber, Oscar Lewis — while fragile treasures in our library repose in Harold's splendid, custom-made boxes. Thank you, Harold!



Publication Committee Chairman Gary Kurutz continues to publish! His latest is a thirty-six-page pamphlet letterpress printed by Patrick Reagh, *California Books Illustrated with Original Photographs: 1856-1890*. From George R. Fardon to the spread of mechanical photographic processes in 1890, Robert Bothamley adds an extensive checklist. Dawson's Book Shop [535 North Larchmont Blvd, Los Angeles CA 90004 (213) 469-2186] produced 200 copies priced at \$25, plus tax and shipping.

With Gary's masterful bibliography of the California Gold Rush just out — published by the Book Club, of course, *Kurutz is collectible!*

His first book is still available through the Book Club of California! For those who missed an opportunity, copies of a finely-crafted *Benjamin C. Truman: California Booster & Bon Vivant* (1984) may be purchased for a mere \$27.50. Civil War correspondent, U.S. Mail Agent, Southern Pacific publicist, and gourmet, Ben Truman barreled his way through California — partially due to

corpulence. His enchanting descriptions of wild stagecoach rides are themselves worthy of a Book Club publication. In this era of heightened awareness of women's contributions, we acquired copies of Frank Pixley's famed *Argonaut* to obtain "Hebe's" gracefully flamboyant society reviews. We read through tortuous columns detailing elaborate feminine silks, satins, and velvets — to then learn from Gary that "Hebe" was the self-described "Major Bella Ben Fatman!" Why, such a revelation is enough to drive us to drink — and Ben Truman always recommended champagne.



Elsewhere in this issue, the lovely and learned Ms. Annie Racer mines Dan De Quille for a little bonanza. Her discovery is of the Wright sort, and reminds us of another publication that fulfills the Book Club's mission to provide new information on California and the West, enhanced by excellent typography, innovative design, and fine binding — *Dan De Quille of the Big Bonanza* (1980). James J. Rawls deftly elucidates the life of William Wright, the premier mining reporter on the Comstock. On the few occasions Virginia City was quiet, Wright filled his columns with tales of local color — gradually becoming more preposterous. Drawn from De Quille's revised manuscripts, these stories are delightful, similar to Ms. Racer's discovery — and available for \$35. Before we erase the Dandy Pen, we wish to mention to our slender red-headed friend that the only reason readers of the Golden Era may have guessed the hoax was the winter's absence of political campaigns.



We now move on to a Book Club publication that is a sleeper, especially at only \$45. Gerald T. White's 1984 *Baptism in Oil* details the first California oil boom, 1864-1866. White, author of a still-acclaimed pioneering history on the Standard Oil Company of California, *Formative Years in the Far West* (1962) blends the correspondence, memoirs, and biography of oil pioneer Stephen F. Peckham.

In 1864, two men began the speculative gusher. The first was Levi Parsons — best known for his scheme in the late 1850s to seize control of the San Francisco waterfront by constructing a sea wall or bulkhead. John B. Church was the second — a brother-in-law to Yale chemistry professor Benjamin Silliman, Jr., who had made his geological reputation predicting the Pennsylvania oil fields.

Hired in 1865 by one of their petroleum companies, Peckham discovered that Parsons, "the perfect incarnation of a scoundrel," and Church, whom Peckham "denominated criminal," had decided in 1864 that the professor's bland life

needed seasoning. Naturally, knowing mining claims, Parsons and Church chose "salt." Peckham revealed that the mix of oil the two gave Silliman to analyze came from their Canada Larga spring in Ventura County — and from cans of refined Pennsylvania petroleum!

Additionally, Peckham's 1904 account relates charming anecdotes. On board the California-bound steamer in 1865, for instance, were two important Nevadans from Austin. One was Reuel Gridley, "angular, awkward, and inexperienced," famous for raising thousands of dollars to care for wounded soldiers through the sale and resale of a flour sack. After seeing John W. Harker described as a red-headed, loquacious "buffoon," who displayed to all a two-foot stack of bank notes, it comes as no surprise that a Nevada banking historian concluded that Harker's First National Bank of Nevada failed in 1869 due to "incompetent management."



"The Arion Press announces the publication of the fiftieth anniversary edition of *WILLIWAW* [1946] the first novel by Gore Vidal signed with a new introduction by the author," reads a handsome prospectus. Stationed on an Army supply vessel in the Aleutian Islands at the end of World War II, Vidal drew on his experiences to detail four days of psychological conflict among a similar twenty-man crew caught in a horrendous storm, or "williwaw." This edition, in 250 copies, is the fifty-first publication of Book Club member Andrew Hoyem's Arion Press. The pleasure of owning this handsome letterpress volume is \$250. Please contact The Arion Press (460 Bryant Street, San Francisco CA 94107; 415 777-9651; FAX: 415 777-2730).



If readers wonder why we do not chronicle Southern California happenings: We have not received any notices! However, our alumni magazine, *Fiat Lux*, profiled the remarkable Sidney Berger, head of Special Collections in the Rivera Library, University of California, Riverside. Berger — printer, paper maker, lecturer, author, and librarian for twenty-five years — teaches hand printing on an 1820s Imperial, and either an 1846 or 1852 table-top Albion. A fine 1834 Columbian — more gaudily painted than ours — and a Civil War field press complete the collection.

Of more interest to the Book Club are Berger's three fine-press books. In 1992, with the Special Collections budget curtailed, he created the Thaumatrope Press to raise money for collection purchases. First came *Six Letters to an*

Apprentice (1994). In the 1930s, Willa Cather, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ring Lardner, and three others, gave tips to an aspiring writer. In progress is Donald Justice's *Banjo Dog*, poems of the Great Depression. The regular edition of 150 is printed on hand-made German Frankfurt Laid paper, and goes for \$50; \$125 gets *Banjo Dog* on French Charlemagne paper, handmade from cotton in an edition of 50. Next up is James Thompson's 18th century poem, *The Seasons*, accompanied by Johannes Lebek's exquisite woodblocks. Those interested may contact Sidney Berger at The Library — 053, P.O. Box 5900, University of California, Riverside, Riverside CA 92517-5900.



Visitors to San Francisco take note: Peter Koch — with an illustration-assist from John Crichton, has printed a simple, handsome guide to "Ten Antiquarian Booksellers in the Union Square Area." Visit one — and then check out the other nine!



Firsts: The Book Collector's Magazine began its seventh volume in January 1997 with a provocative statement by editor Kathryn Smiley that "book people are different." Articles point out that collecting does not have to be expensive. P. Scott Brown, a Santa Cruz bookman, discusses the Chicano literature that flowered in the 1960s, bears fruit to the present, and exists in first editions ranging generally from \$35 to \$125. Lee Biondi, proprietor of Los Angeles's Heritage Bookshop, exhibits detective skills discussing the 1001 Arabian Nights — a work which has no definitive text. Intriguingly, the earliest surviving manuscript, dating from the fourteenth-century, has only 300 stories, but these tales in all of their permutations have been a fixture of English literature since 1706. For those interested, ten issues of *Firsts* annually are \$40 from P.O. Box 65166, Tucson AZ 85728-5166.



With regret, we record the passing of Haskell Field Norman, 81, who, as a psychoanalyst, assembled first editions of Sigmund Freud's works, and as a bibliophilic expert, shared his knowledge in *One Hundred Books Famous in Medicine* (1995). As the leader of the International Wine and Food Society in Marin County, Dr. Norman was a kindred spirit with Major Ben Truman. We also mourn autograph expert Charles Hamilton, Jr.

Robert J. Chandler

Review

Alexander Dalrymple, *An Account of the Discoveries Made in the South Pacifick Ocean previous to 1764* (1767; reprinted 1996, Australian Maritime Series, No. 3.)

"Bibliophile Influences History," could have been headlines in late eighteenth-century London. Two organizations in Sydney, the Australian National Maritime Museum at Darling Harbor, and Hordern House, publisher and dealer in antiquarian books, at Potts Point, worked together to produce a beautiful facsimile of a remarkable work: Alexander Dalrymple, *An Account of the Discoveries Made in the South Pacifick Ocean previous to 1764* (1767). This 140-page work launched British scientific exploration and brought modern Australia and New Zealand into being.

How did it come to be? At age fifteen, Dalrymple (1737-1808) joined the East India Company, where he embarked on his life's quest — not the company's ordinary paperwork, but something more grand. "General geography and discoveries have almost from infancy been the fond object of his attention," he wrote in the *Account*, but his goal was focused: "The first and most striking object of research was, the discovery of a Southern Continent." He reasoned that "a Continent is wanting on the South of the Equator, to counterpoize the land of the North, and to maintain the earth's motion."

With this in mind, Dalrymple scoured India and the East Indies for books, manuscripts, and charts on South Pacific explorations, and for five years, sailed around Borneo, the Sulu Archipelago, and the Philippines, producing the first of ultimately 4,000 charts for the East India Company. In 1765, the young explorer arrived in London. While browsing in the antiquarian book shop of Thomas Davies on Russel Street, Dalrymple found a treasure that brought his research together. A century before, the French economic wizard Jean Baptiste Colbert had assembled two volumes of manuscripts and pamphlets on Spanish explorations. As Dalrymple held them, a plan took shape.

Venus crossed in front of the sun four times every 243 years, and the next transit would be on June 3, 1769. Observations taken from different parts of the globe aided astronomical calculations, but unfortunately in the southern hemisphere, the planet of the love goddess appeared only to a tiny sliver. The Royal Society intended to have observers in place — but where? The professor of astronomy at Oxford, who in 1766 convinced the Society to back the idea, plotted points on a 1714 map with greatly inexact longitude.

In 1767, Dalrymple, a mere thirty years old, determined to be the Society's candidate, and made his case by circulating a few copies of a small octavo vol-

ume: *The Account*. In it, he made no mention of the transit of Venus; he intended a voyage of discovery. Dalrymple's great achievement was, as a bibliophile, to acquire the best accounts of South Sea exploration; as a historian, to evaluate the observations; and as a navigator, to adjust longitude and revise Robert de Vaugondy's 1756 map.

The *Account* contained three parts, with the first the largest. In Part 1, "A Geographical Description of Places," Dalrymple summarized and quoted narratives from Spaniard Alvaro de Mendaña in 1567 to Dutchman Jacob Roggeveen in 1722. With its large type, latitude and longitude placed in the margins, and succinct information, he had produced sailing directions — all pointing to a large hole between the northwest coast of Australia and a southeast fragment of New Zealand.

Dalrymple provided "An Examination of the Conduct of the Discoverers in the Tracks they pursued" in the second portion as a study of leadership. Without a strong sense of purpose, lacking in the commanders recorded, an expedition would fail. Tied in was another laudable purpose: "Indeed he shall think his pains amply rewarded," Dalrymple wrote, "if these sheets are instrumental in saving the life of one Indian from the destruction occasioned by impatience."

In the final section, "Investigation of what may be farther expected in the South-Sea," Dalrymple returned to his boyhood goal — the search for the Great South Land. "There is a seeming necessity for a Southern Continent to maintain a conformity in the two hemispheres," he declared. As a friend of Adam Smith, the first modern economist, Dalrymple postulated that England needed "the discovery of new countries and people, to invigorate the hand of industry."

On April 3, 1768, the Admiralty crushed Dalrymple's dreams when it refused to give control of a navy ship to a civilian; he refused to go as an observer, since divided commands produced disastrous results. The coveted post went to James Cook, nine years older than Dalrymple, who had mapped the St. Lawrence River during wartime and charted the angular, rugged coast of Newfoundland.

Was Dalrymple's influence at an end? No! On August 25, 1768, naturalist Joseph Banks boarded the *Endeavour* at Plymouth carrying the *Account*. Besides heading toward Tahiti for the transit of Venus, James Cook had secret instructions to investigate the "great southern continent." On this epochal first voyage, lasting until 1771, Cook sailed into the void on Dalrymple's chart and found the east coast of Australia and the north coast of New Zealand, claiming both lands for Great Britain. With the *Account* aboard, Cook knew that if he did not possess the *resolution for discovery*, Dalrymple would *endeavour* to replace him for the next voyage.

Dalrymple, incidentally, was the impulse for Captain Cook's second expedition. From 1772 to 1775, Cook searched from Australia to South America — being the first to cross the Antarctic Circle — for the elusive continent. A chronometer coupled with lunar observations gave him accurate longitude, and banished the Great South Land forever.

Meantime, while Cook was at sea — and even wrecked for all that England knew — Dalrymple revealed publicly his plan for discovery. In 1769, he doubled the preface and offered the *Account* in a small edition — 101 were remaindered to the author — keeping “Printed in the Year 1767” on the title page. Quickly, though, Dalrymple replaced it, strengthening his fitness for command through a two-volume translation of Spanish and Dutch narratives, *An Historical Collection of the Several Voyages and Discoveries in the South Pacific Ocean* (1769 and 1771). Since then, only twenty-two copies of the *Account* are known, all with the expanded preface.

This edition of Dalrymple's *Account* is the first reprint and the third number of the Australian Maritime Series, which makes available facsimiles of unobtainable works. Newbold & Collins hand bound 950 copies, containing 188 pages, in midnight blue Scottish calf for the spine and Margo Snape's marbled papers for the covers. Dr. Kevin Fewster of the Maritime Museum provided the forward, while Dr. Andrew Cook of the British Museum, author of a forthcoming biography of this eighteenth century cartographer and navigator, introduced Dalrymple's life and times.

The regular edition of 900 is Australian \$129, plus A\$ 25 postage [about \$123 U.S. with the Australian dollar calculated at 80 cents]; a slipcased deluxe edition of 50 — signed by Fewster — is A\$ 550. Please contact Hordern House for details [77 Victoria Street, Potts Point, Sydney, New South Wales 2011, Australia; Telephone: 011-61-2-356-4411; FAX: 011-61-2-357-3635] and save the fine prospectus. It provides in color the painting of Alexander Dalrymple produced in black-and-white for the frontispiece.

Act now. The first two numbers of the Australian Maritime Series issued in editions of 750 quickly sold out. First came Mary Ann Parker's *A Voyage Around the World* (1795) which described Sydney in 1791. The second, Francois Pelsaert's *The Voyage of the Batavia* (1647) told of Australian discovery and shipwreck in 1629 — and won the Galley Club's Award for Excellence in 1991.

— Robert J. Chandler

Dr. Robert J. Chandler is Senior Researcher, Historical Services, at Wells Fargo Bank, San Francisco; Director, The Book Club of California, and Chairman of the QN-L Committee.

Gifts & Acquisitions

Our thanks to Club Treasurer, Monday night barkeep, and noted collector of the works of Thomas Bewick, John Borden, who has just given the library a soft-cover British publication with the obvious title, *Thomas Bewick: An Illustrated Record of His Life and Work*. This was published in 1979 by the Tyne and Wear County Council Museums, U.K., and is a welcome addition to our small collection on Bewick; it will be shelved with our reference collection.



Your current reviewer was terribly remiss about a gift made too many *Quarterlies* ago, a thirty-two-page *AbraCadaBra*, Number 9, Spring 1995, given to us by member Kitty Maryatt, a special editor for the calligraphy number, in this issue. It obviously wanted too much reading by several members and only recently found its way back on our desk. Our regrets and our sincere thanks to Kitty Maryatt; we are delighted to include this in our growing collection on calligraphy.



Artist and author Larry G. Segedin — a non-member from Hawaii — gave us a copy of an exciting book, *130 Bush Street: An Illustrated Story about Four Buildings and a Monument in San Francisco*. The monument is the famed Douglas Tilden

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mechanics sculpture at the intersection of Battery, Bush, and Market streets. The author-artist uses this monument as a pivotal point for the book, with a first drawing of it in its pool and the background as it appeared before the earthquake of 1906; an overlay shows it surrounded by rubble. Segedin uses it again several times, associating it with the four buildings. Reproduced here in full color are over thirty exquisitely rendered architectural drawings with almost as many architectural details that are reproduced in black line on inter-leaved pages. These remarkable renderings are reminiscent of the great renderings made by Samuel Chamberlain while he was teaching at MIT. But this is too long ago for our artist; his education was at California Polytechnic University in 1958. He notes in the colophon that he developed the story while working as a draftsman at Skidmore, Owings and Merrill's San Francisco Office.

This a most handsome book, one worthy of a place in our collection. Our sincere thanks to Larry Segedin. (Publisher: Stackwell Books, 3879 Lurline Drive, Honolulu, Hawaii 96816; telephone 808/737-17874.)

— Albert Sperisen



Jack Lloyd has just given The Book Club a book by his father, the late Lester Lloyd, long active in the book community. *Mackenzie & Harris* was Mr. Lloyd's last project, and his family was pleased that he was able to see a copy of the book before his death, on October 16, 1996. The book is a history of the type-founding firm of MacKenzie and Harris. This copy is one of a very few bound with a half-leather spine and silk over boards, the rest being in cloth. The book chronicles the existence of the most important typefounding company in San Francisco, and the life of long-time member and former Book Club President Carroll T. Harris. It will add greatly to our printing history collection and will be a valuable supplement to Mr. Harris's oral history.

— Barbara Land



Some time ago, we acquired *Contemporary Designer Bookbinders: An Illustrated Directory*, a major reference work of international scope, and one including some familiar names and faces. The editor is Philip Ward, founder of The Private Libraries Association. This fine reference is shelved in our library; copies may be ordered from The Oleander Press, 17 Stansgate Avenue, Cambridge, CB2 2QZ, England. The price is US \$45.00.

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